423 cost payable over a period of thirty years. As pointed out
657 by Professor Abu-Zeid (n.d.), this law is welcomed in part
656 because the garden area to which it really applies (the garden area in al-Qasr would be the 'izba sector) is not considered "tribal territory" or lineage-owned as are the barley and pasture regions.

653 Governmental activity growing out of the "Desert Law"
177 has been an important catalyst for social, economic and
*613 political change. All of these aspects of change had repurcussions on the lineage system and the authority structure of the Bedouins. In 1959, the government entered al-Qasr with the goal of revitalizing and reorganizing the hydraulic system of the area. The revival of the Roman water system, especially the network of cisterns covering the southern region of al-Qasr, and, on the coast, the restoration of the well system and underground galleries, the drilling of new wells and the intensification of olive farming have all led to a levelling of economic differentiation between lineages and between individuals.

659 In 1956, the Egyptian government passed the Cooperative
177 Law (U.A.R. Law Number 217) establishing agricultural cooperative
• 474 societies throughout the country. But not until 1959 did this law have any impact on the tribes of the Western Desert. Generally, the cooperative society has served as a primary
[433] and successful agent of social change in the desert. It has

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657 sanctioned the direction of economic development from a
177 pastoral to a market-oriented, agricultural mode of production.
• 474 Land reclamation and development projects administered by the
433 cooperatives encourage the Bedouins to produce cash crops.
In this way, Al-Qasr is being drawn into the national economy.
Price changes and seasonal commodity preferences in the Nile
Valley now affect the economy of al-Qasr. The generation of a
[181] cash economy has created a competitive spirit and a degree of
individual independence which cuts across tribal loyalty and
affiliations. The cooperative society, in this manner, tends
to be a "social equalizer."

657 But economic transformation as the intended goal of the
177 Cooperative Law is far from being an accomplished fact. Al-
178 Qasr is still a traditional Bedouin society in the sense that
474 the lineage structure is the framework in which economic and
*613 social relations take place. Because the cooperative society,
as a new basis for association, threatens the dominance of the
lineage principle, it has become the focal point for a struggle
between the old and new.

657 The major problem encountered by the government officials
177 in this program is that the cooperative society, as a central
474 agent for the dispensation of aid products, becomes a pawn in
661 tribal power politics. The government, forced to rely upon the
435 prestigious and wealthy men for the initiation of an innovative
program, found itself unable to prevent profiteering and the

657 sale of goods on the black-market. Tribal leaders, or members
177 of a "status group," in whose hands the operation of the
• 474 cooperative society had been placed, confiscated more than
661 their share of food and fodder and resold it either in the
[435] Nile Valley or to their own tribesmen for whom it had originally been intended. The government could not really prosecute the guilty parties for fear of jeopardizing the entire program. Nor could they convince the cheated tribesmen that they had been treated unfairly by their leaders. For one thing, the
[673] Bedouins did not consider that their leaders were committing a wrong; furthermore, any Bedouin who would go to the government to inform on another Bedouin would be subjected to a
[577] trial by Bedouin justice. It is still the traditional codes of Bedouin law and honor, and not the modern judiciary system, which prevail in al-Qasr.

474 The cooperative society in al-Qasr is one of thirteen in the general area of Marsa Matruh. It began with a membership of twenty-five, twenty-two of these were from the 'Aishaibat tribe. Today, the enrollment is 139 official, and another 195 "unofficial" members. The unofficial members represent unregistered branches of the al-Qasr cooperative. The Bedouins
[735] explain that they cannot allow any members of the tribe to go hungry, and, therefore, they will distribute food to all those
[661] who need it (Zein, n.d.). This, of course, shows that those cooperative officers who do profiteer are not entirely oblivious

474 661 of the needs of their tribesmen; that, in fact, the patronage system is relative to the traditional situation. Unavoidably, 474 619 the al-Qasr cooperative society is dominated by one tribe: 107 of its members are from the 'Aishaibat, while only 32 are from other tribes. This relationship between traditional and modern structures is common throughout the Western Desert. When a new cooperative is organized within the boundaries of a certain tribal mintaqa, members of the local tribe will resign from other cooperatives to join "their own." Thus, when a new cooperative was founded in Marsa Matruh, twenty members of the Jum'iat tribe left the al-Qasr branch to join the new chapter which catered largely to the needs of the Jum'iat in the town.

474 747 433 177 The World Food Program of the Food and Agriculture Organization (F.A.O.) of the United Nations operates through the cooperative society. It has had an impact on the economy of the Bedouins of al-Qasr. In 1963, this organization, with the cooperation of the U.A.R. government, proposed to stabilize economic conditions in the Western Desert by providing 4,000 Bedouin families (20,000 persons) with enough food and fodder to help them through the three dry summer months. The program was designed to encourage mixed and settled farming through the reclamation of 20,000 acres of arid desert land, while its range improvement project was to furnish pasturage for 500,000 sheep throughout the Northwestern Coastal Zone. In al-Qasr,

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433 this number included pasturage for 11,000 sheep (Abu-Zeid n.d.: 19-27).

•[474] F.A.O. has encountered a number of serious problems and the program has received setbacks. The program, as an agent of social change, failed to take proper measure of the structural and ideological aspects of the Bedouin traditional system. Range improvement projects were carried out with disregard for existing tribal boundaries (the mintaqa) in the desert. In one case, the Bedouins removed fences on their property, and allowed sheep to destroy an entire experimental range area. Food distribution has fallen short because polygyny as a structural feature of marriage and the Bedouin family was not taken into account. The government estimated five persons per family, and planned to distribute food to 4,000 families. They were only able to subsidize 3,281 families. Aid officials failed to consider the strength of Bedouin values. To qualify

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426 for government aid, a Bedouin must belong to his local cooperative society. Some Bedouins wish to remain independent of government business, and others cannot afford the 50 piasters membership dues. A man may borrow money from another, of course, but in al-Qasr a "debt" is actually a particular kind of social relation which, like all others, carries with it a set of specific rights and obligations. A debt among Bedouins is a

[571] complex relationship: it may draw two parties together, or it may be, as it is with the Kachins of Burma (Leach 1954:153),

747 the basis of conflict. Bedouins may be unwilling to contract
177 such a potentially significant relationship for the 50 piasters
474 it takes to join the cooperative society. In yet another area,
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591 program administrators concerned with nutritional improvement
747 have ignored the culturally important areas of food preferences
177 and, more seriously, food prohibitions. The Bedouins, who
262 subsist mainly on their own animal products, barley bread, and a few fresh vegetables, are extremely hesitant to accept what they consider ritually "unclean meat from foreigners," powdered milk, dried fish, and Kraft cheese. They are willing to
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177 accept grain, flour, and the cottonseed cakes which are used as fodder. In other words, the Bedouins seem to be presented
[178]
[433] with poor alternatives which may tend to reinforce choices related to the traditional productive organization, i.e., pastoralism. The exogenous stimuli to change are so culturally objectionable that they actually generate conflict situations and misunderstanding between agents and recipients of change.

747 Government programs have aimed at one aspect of
177 Bedouin society, the economic structure. They have ignored
433 the cultural underpinning of social organization, the system of meanings in terms of which social action takes place (Geertz 1957:32-54). The relationship between social and economic behavior is, of course, an extremely important one. But the economic structure cannot be transformed independently of a specific cultural structure.

654 1960, were olive tree owners. One individual, who owned 400
245 trees before the reclamation program, now owns 1,400 trees.
177 His increase has not all been at government expense, but a large share of it has been. Of the 9,514 trees planted by the government, 4,666 of them have been planted in the barley and wadi area to the south; 4,848 in the garden area on the coast. In the southern sector, a Bedouin who owns at
[312] least ten acres of land may have the government drill a well and erect a windmill pump on his property. For this, he pays
[452] 350 Egyptian pounds (approximately $1,000.00) over a thirty-year period. The Bedouin is willing to undertake this contract, and also to take land out of barley production, because he sees the future security of the olive market. Because of this, also, he is willing to agree on land boundaries and to register his land with the government.

657 Economic transition would not be possible, nor could the Bedouins afford to hazard it, were it not for government welfare payments in the form of staple products. These rations stabilize the mixed economy of the al-Qasr while promoting a shift to a fuller dependence on agriculture. Of the thirteen
657 cooperative societies in the Matruh area, al-Qasr is the
•474 largest and has been designated as a pilot project for the whole Western Desert. Al-Qasr garners the largest share of government aid, and, consequently, is heavily dependent upon it. The table below shows the amount of aid given monthly to

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TABLE 2

AID PER MONTH TO THIRTEEN COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES OF MATRUH AREA, 1963

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	No. of Families	Beef	Fish	Oil	Cheese	Tea	Powdered Milk
al-Qasr Aid:	308 (1344)*	1008	604	604	1209	201	1209
Total Aid:	627 (3134)*	2350	1410	1410	2826	470	2820

*Number of Persons

al-Qasr during the year 1963. This amount is compared with the total amount of aid given to all thirteen cooperatives in the area.

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During this period, 1960 to 1964, the government has succeeded in stabilizing the pastoral sector of the economy. The Bedouins are given barley and cottonseed-oil cakes as fodder for their animals. Consequently, they must depend upon their own barley crop only to a minimal degree. There are 144,804 sheep in the Marsa Matruh area, as of 1963. In al-Qasr, 332 men own 9,958 sheep, about 30 sheep per man. One sheep requires a kilogram of barley and six kilograms of cottonseed cake per month. The table below shows the amount of fodder distributed to al-Qasr and the whole Matruh sector, in 1963, through the cooperative societies.

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241 when planted in large quantities. The southern zone of al-Qasr
407 is best suited for these crops, and the tractor is necessary
434 for a successful crop.
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407 Tractors are rented through the cooperative society.
474 Local cooperative officers are responsible for seeing that all
[427] members share in the use of the tractor. But, in fact, officers and their closer relatives monopolize the tractors. The gov-
[654] ernment has allotted to the al-Qasr cooperative five tractors. They feel that it would jeopardize the whole program of economic reform if they were to dictate the way in which the tractors
407 are to be used. Consequently, the tractor, like the rations
619 of foodstuffs, has become a pawn in tribal power plays. In
474 one case, not in al-Qasr, a tractor-driver who was a member of the 'Ali Abyad tribe insisted that members of the 'Ali Ahmar tribe pay him a 50 piaster "tip" to have their fields plowed. Because of situations such as these, most Bedouins prefer that cooperative membership coincide with local group membership. It is better, they say, if the 'Aishaibat of al-Qasr have their own cooperative because they know how to handle problems among themselves. The government, during this transitional period, seems to agree.

407 One reason that tractors are monopolized by a small group is that there are not enough of the machines to handle the plowing. Of the five tractors in al-Qasr, seldom were more than two working simultaneously. Often, this was a result of

634 554 657 674 [743] which result in permanent bodily harm. Reporting such cases is a fairly minor proceeding since such cases come to the knowledge of the authorities through other channels, mainly from talks involved in the mediation for the bloodmoney or from the hospital to which serious assault cases are usually taken. Besides, reporting a crime does not mean convicting the offender. This latter depends on evidence which, in case the dispute has been settled by tribal proceedings, is hard for the police authorities to find.

634 554 657 While the government demands do not impose serious conflicts of loyalty on the part of the omda, if successful, his position with the government can bring to his tribal segments great benefits. These benefits are usually in the form of various social and economic aids including fodder for the animals and food and clothing for the people during the dry years. Other benefits including providing the tribal population with olive trees and helping them clear many of the old Roman wells and establishing wind mills for nominal fees. Not everyone in the area can have such benefits. Some do not even know they exist. A successful omda could manipulate the administration to get as many benefits for his tribal segment as possible.. Some successful omdas were able to have [871] [474] the government build schools in their districts, establish cooperative units to market local products such as wool, sheep, and olive oil.

634 554 657 518 This should not lead us, however, to conclude that the position of the omda in the Western Desert does not involve any kind of conflicting loyalty or that he is always supported by his people or even trusted by them. One informant said that the omda of his biat is "...government man, not ours....He would sell us all if this pleases his masters in the